

THE REVIVED ARCTIC GEOPOLITICS: THE IMPLICATION OF GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS OF RUSSIAN FEDERATION ON THE ARCTIC REGION

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ABSTRACT

The article studies the (geo) political moves and activities of the Russian Federation in the Arctic region, which shape and cause the intensification of the Arctic geopolitics, making it a new geopolitical hotspot. The article studies contemporary Russian actions, political choices, and developments in the region, especially its security, energy, economic interests, its goals and means of realization that are strategies. Notably, these geopolitical realities lead to the rise of two tendencies in the Arctic region, cooperation, and competition. After all, geopolitical concerns will be presented through studying governance and territorial claims, delivering particular significance to the claim of the Russian Federation to the North Pole. The demonstration of the permanent correlation of both Russian geopolitical realities and the Arctic will show the gradual turn of the region into the geopolitical hotspot.

KEYWORDS: Russia, Arctic, Geopolitics, Security, Energy Resources, UNCLOS & NSR

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, the Arctic gain more and more importance among the both scientific and political circles. Particularly, the increasing geopolitical interest towards the Arctic region has much to do with the two major geographical factors that emerged from global warming and the melting of the Arctic ice shield. Firstly, natural resources. According to the United States Geological Survey (2008) assessment, the Arctic deposits incorporate over “90 billion barrels of oil, 1,669 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 44 billion barrels of natural gas liquids” (p. 1), that is, roughly 20 % of undiscovered hydrocarbon supplies worldwide, respectively 30 % of natural gas plus 13 % of crude oil. About 84 % of them are considered to be offshore, from which 70% of the total is natural gas. Next, the trans-Arctic water passages and routes, particularly Northwest Passage and Northern Sea Route (NSR). The low level of ice opens opportunities to operationalize these transport routes, that is foreseen to cut the existing global navigational routes considerably, expand fishing and tourism as well as make it easier and possible to extract the raw materials in the offshore areas in a long run term. Likewise, the other minerals such as iron ore, gold, nickel, and other materials could be exposed in the onshore areas that were covered by ice previously (Gratz, 2012)

RUSSIA: REVIVING THE ARCTIC

The USA, Russia, Denmark, Norway, and Canada, identified as the ‘Arctic Five,’ are the key players in Arctic affairs who possess real capacities and capabilities to extend their respective boundaries.¹

Out of Arctic Five, Russia is the principal player with meaningful security, energy, economic, and governance interests in the Arctic region. Several factors manifested this point. First of all, the geopolitical

¹ In the 1920s, each of them obtained sectors on the bases of their northern Arctic frontiers.

importance of Russia is manifested by its scale and role in the area. The largest Arctic sector is Russian, covering 22,600 km out of 38,700 km or 58% of the Arctic overall shoreline. In addition to this, the Russian Arctic sector contains over 9 million sq. km, comprising 40 % of the entire Arctic region and 18% of the Russian Federation, its importance is manifested by its military presence. Secondly, the largest Russian, as well as regional naval bases are considered the two Russian cities of Murmansk and Arkhangelsk, where the considerable amount of Russian land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, airfields, and long-range (strategic) aviation are deployed. The Northern Fleet, with its ballistic missile (nuclear) submarines being regarded as the most motorized force in the Arctic region, still remains the capability of maintaining the balance of power in support of Russia. Thirdly, the presence of natural resources is a very decisive factor here. Russia is estimated to hold the most undiscovered hydrocarbon reserves in the Arctic, approximately 52%. The territories under the Russian control or the ones following its claim contain greater than 250 million barrels of oil and gas of oil equivalent. The fourth factor is the possession of the most influential industrial complex in the region. The economic activity considerably outperforms the ones of its neighbors. The share of the Arctic industry within the entire scale of economic activity of the Russian Federation and for its prospects is vast, taking into consideration that 20% out of the Russian GDP, including more than 22% out of its overall exportation provided by the Russian Arctic sector. The final and very decisive factor to emphasize the importance of Russia as a critical player in the region is that Russia has apparent domination of the mastering the region as well as generations of exploration and expertise in operationalizing the NSR, icebreakers fleet, and polar aviation. Russia is the world leader of icebreakers, having a fleet of 40 of them. Furthermore, four out of five largest Arctic cities are Russian with the most significant infrastructure (Tsvetkov, 2014; ATKearney, 2015; Kapyla & Harri, 2013; Danyuk, 2014; Malisheva, 2012).

In recent years, Russia is focusing more and more on the importance of Arctic and links it to its economic and security goals of the 21st century. Russia has considerable security, energy, economic interests in the Arctic, and therefore, its actions are settled by aggregate of factors.

The Arctic could meet the future energy needs of the world's leading economies and particularly Russia. For Russian foreign policy, the energy resources are of particular importance as they provide solid leverage for it.² Besides, the mature basins in Siberia are drying up gradually. Hence, in order to preserve energy resources and the income, Russia needs these resources. The 62% of gas and 20% of oil overall reserves of Russia are within its Arctic sector, comprising all together 1.6 trillion tons with a total value of up to 15 trillion US Dollars. It is believed that the continental shelf holds roughly 25% of total offshore assets worldwide (Kapyla & Harri, 2013; Kremlin, 2014). As Valeri Tsvetkov (2014), mentions, "it is obvious that these resources have to become the fundamental importance for the prosperity of Russia." (p. 2).

To move forward towards fulfilling its energy interests and mastering the region, the Russian Federation took three significant steps. The first step was done in 2013 during which the first time the stationary pre-development platform of Gazprom, named 'Prirazlomnaya' (Приразломная), allowing to produce 6.6 million tons annually, started the extraction and production of the new variation of oil named ARCO (Arctic Oil) in Russian Arctic zone and shipped to its buyer in 2014 (Gazprom, 2019a). The second step was the realization of the world's northernmost well in the Kara Sea, named 'Universitetskaya – 1' (Университетская - 1), considered as a breakthrough in the oil and gas industry (Magay, 2014). The last step towards the mastering the region was the 'Yamal Megaproject' (Ямальный Мегaproект) in the Yamal

²Russian Federation provides roughly 33% of Europe's overall consumed natural gas. Besides, it provides Russia with considerable leverage in the post-soviet space, particularly in the integrational processes on the Eurasian basis.

Peninsula, including its contiguous waters, where 15 basins of oil plus 11 of gas were discovered. It is considered as one of the most significant Russian hydrocarbon related projects in the region. In 2002, Gazprom identified the Yamal Peninsula as a region of its strategic interests, which comprise about 20% of the overall gas supplies of the Russian Federation. Since 2011, onshore and offshore fields of the Yamal Peninsula are considered essential elements to the provision as well as to the growth of the Russian gas Industry. The advantages of Yamal are the large reserve with high productivity, its scale of preparedness for credible extraction, and closeness to the operational gas infrastructure. The Important fact is that most of the projects are joint projects with western and Chinese counterparts, with share revenue. The Yamal Mega project plays a leading role in the Russian oil and gas industry in the current era (Gazprom, 2019b). According to the World Petroleum Council report of 2015, by 2030, Russia will get about 55% of all deposits in the Arctic, and by 2050 from 20 to 30 % of all hydrocarbon production in the Russian Federation will be supplied by Arctic shelf (Pogosyan, 2015).

Several factors determine the importance of security interests. First of all, the Russian Arctic zone is one of the essential pillars of Russian security, taking into account the scale of the military zone that extends over the Eurasian continent. Secondly, the scale of the military presence in the Russian Arctic zone is hard to ignore. Various military objects and facilities, as well as industrial infrastructure and defense enterprises, either exist or in the stage of completion in the Arctic sector of Russia (Tsvetkov, 2014). A significant amount of land-based inter-continental ballistic missiles, as well as long-range (strategic) aviation, including the airfields, are still deployed there.

The ports of Arkhangelsk and Murmansk are perceived as the most significant sea bases of the Russian Federation. Nuclear missile submarines and the Northern Fleet are the most mobile forces, which recently are gaining more and more importance connected with challenges that Russian land-based missiles encounter. Also, the Russian Arctic Zone is a prioritized area for Russian anti-ballistic missile defense systems (Kapyła & Harri, 2013). So, taking into account all the realities mentioned above, this geopolitically axial area is a vital element of the Russian security that needs to be protected. Recently, the collision of national interests and the emergence of crisis situations have considerably raised, mostly connected with the maritime boundary issues (Tsvetkov, 2014). That is an impetus for the growth of the Russian military in the region to be able to preserve its ability to possess hard power in case of any politico-military scenarios (Bender & Nudelman, 2015).

Nonetheless, a direct military confrontation is not feasible; however, the fact of increased military presence and overall militarization of the region cause Russian concerns and gradually make the region a new geopolitical hotspot (Danyuk, 2014). Signed on December 26, 2014, the military doctrine of the Russian Federation highlights the necessity of expansion of the Russian role and impact in the Arctic. To fulfill the goal, Russia is dealing with various projects such as the construction of ports as well as in the restoration of the ruined Soviet military complexes (Dadwal, 2015). The aim of expansion of influence was emphasized by both Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Vladimir Putin in 2014. Wherein Shoigu talked about the need and ways to expand the Russian influence (Bojyeva, 2014), Putin emphasized that the Arctic region is “a sphere of their special interest” and have to be protected (Marzalik, 2014). The Arctic is a region where Russia potentially can assert its dominant position as a regional geopolitical power.

The importance of the economic interests is conditioned by NSR and massive scale of raw materials, other than oil, exceeding 22.4 trillion US Dollars. Besides oil and gas, Russian Arctic zone holds vast reserves of raw materials actually much of the Russian platinum (47 %), chromium and manganese (90 %), gold (40 %), phlogopite (60 – 90 %), diamonds (100 %), nickel and cobalt (90 %), vermiculite (100 %) apatite (50 %), copper (60 %), gas (95 %) iron, wood, as well as 98 % of

rare metals. The reserves of coal are expected to reach 780 billion tones, at least. In sum, the northern territories produce about 60% of the overall Russian export of minerals. So, they raise the value of the crucial region for Russia's overall economy and prosperity. Another decisive factor is the NSR that is hard to overestimate, which from its date of creation, serves as a national transportation route for Russia and linking east-west and overall north of the country. The first step taken is to increase the efficiency of the transport system of NSR, by making it year-round operational national sea highway that would let to establish an alternative maritime highway between Europe and Asia (Pilyavski, 2011). In the late 20th century and beginning of the 21st century, Russia made an essential step to form and implement national maritime policy. However, to be able to advance it further, Russia needs new investments, particularly in a new generation of vehicles icebreaker fleet, amphibious transport systems; in unification and integration of existing transport and communication systems with the energy projects, as well as in the creation of new, technologically advanced logistics, aiming to link and unite all the infrastructure networks of airports, railroads as well as the NSR and its adjacent waters into the one system. The dominant Arctic Icebreaker Fleet lets Russia promote and advance its interests in the Arctic region. The most potential traffic will be in the areas of deposit production, both onshore and offshore (Kharlamova, 2015). Recently, internationalization and freedom of shipping in NSR, gradually gaining relevance. For Russia, it is unacceptable, taking into account that there is no alternative route for 'northern delivery,' which is again, the only transport route integrating the whole north of the Russian Federation. Hence, Russia cannot offer international control and put under the risks economic relations, and integration between separate areas of the country brought together through NSR (Voronkov, 2012).

Taking into account Russian geopolitical interests, Russia has three primary goals in that Arctic that is interrelated. The first goal of Russia is connected with clarification of borders and national jurisdiction in the Arctic region. Mainly Russia aims to consolidate the lines of Russian exclusive economic zones (EEZ) and continental shelf with its neighbors as well as regain authority over the Soviet Union's Arctic zone, comprising 44% of the total Arctic. With the ratification of the UNCLOS, Russia has adopted all its provisions and has established 12 nautical miles (nm) territorial sea and 200nm EEZ, limiting its fleet to the coastal territory. There is a need for Russia to guarantee conclusive delineation of sectors with consideration of a complete package of earlier reached arrangements and agreements between the Soviet Union, then Russia and its neighbors, in full recognition of all legal provisions of the adopted documents relating to the continental shelf and admiralty law, granted to Russia. If Russia does not solve these issues, the full control of the Arctic areas that are under Russian control might be endangered, starting with the question of the internationalization of the NSR. The second and third goals are tightly associated with each other and depend on the first one. Russia needs to ensure its geopolitical dominance in the Arctic, and guarantee the Northern Fleet's freedom of navigation, which currently is limited from 12 to 24 nm. The Northern Fleet is a vital tool to stress its dominance in the Arctic region (Tsvetkov, 2014; Zubacheva, 2014). Although, the coastal state has relatively moderate benefits concerning the navigation on the waters of the continental shelf; however, it does possess authority rights to build artificial constructions, installations, including islands based on *mutatis mutandis* (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea [UNCLOS], 1982). So, Russia seeks the overall advancement of its positions utilizing prolongation of its continental shelf in the Arctic, which would make the Russian regional dominance more feasible, which in turn will guarantee the freedom of navigation of the Northern Fleet. The restoration of the jurisdiction over the former Soviet sector would grant Russia with approximately one-half of the whole region plus firm the Russian stance in the contest for domination.

To advance its goals in the region, Russia uses a combination of strategies. The Strategy for the development of the Arctic zone, comprised of seven Chapters, is the most relevant one. The framework of realization is the integrated efforts of

all stakeholders in Russia concerning the settlement of critical issues connected with the development of the region. The Strategy aims to bring to realization the national interests and goals by addressing main issues following the strategic priorities. The Strategy foresees overall development as well as improvement of social and economic conditions of the region via better governance. According to the Strategy, the Arctic sector of the Russian Federation may provide Russia's need for deposits, aqua biological, and raw materials significantly. The completion of the Strategy envisages an overall growth of offshore fields in the Arctic; replacement of production from the traditional fields to the new ones after 2020; joint projects as well as research of the Arctic marginal areas, including the continental shelf; construction of new settlement for workers in the oil and gas fields; realization of large scale infrastructures, to be able to link newly and previously mastered Arctic sectors of Russian Federation. In case of NSR, Russia aims to make it as a unified national transport highway through paving new corridors; building as well as upgrading ports, roads, aviation routes, terminal pipelines and railroads; constructing new icebreakers and transport vessels with governmental aid; creating unified electronic network 'Electric Arctic'; creating technologically advanced fleet with superior capacity to research and serve on the Arctic shelf; increasing cargo transportation via the NSR as well as to update its regulative structure. The completion of the Strategy is envisaged in two stages. In the first stage, it is roughly expected to finish the preparation of the hydrographic works concerning Russian submission of prolongation of the continental shelf plus the creation of socio-economic conditions to improve the national security via the overall advancement of the area. The second stage, by 2020, envisages the start of the transition to the sustainable social and economic development of the Russia Arctic sector. It is expected to achieve Russian competing interests in the sphere of deposit extractions and NSR operationalization, mentioned above (The Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and National Security up to 2020, 2013).

The National Security and Energy strategies are meant to complement with some provisions of the main one. According to the Russian National Security up to 2020, the economy is a significant security determinant, and the sustainable growth of it is linked to the vast utilization of natural reserves. The infrastructure development is prioritized, targeting the economic contrasts between the regions, particularly in the Far East and the Arctic. Energy security and especially energy resources have a unique application in foreign policy. They bolster the Russian position and influence internationally. For long-run perspectives, the need to incline northward towards the Arctic resources is emphasized (Zysk 2010). The 'Energy Strategy of Russia until 2030' highlights that the increase of gas production depends and associated with fresh gas and oil generating fields. These fields refer to the Far East, and East Siberian reserves, the continental shelf of Arctic and the Yamal Peninsula, including its offshore fields. They were given priority for the deposit development. Yamal has crucial importance for strategy implementation, so currently, it has engaged in the vast scale investment and infrastructure projects under the Yamal Megaproject (Kabilkin, 2014).

The mechanisms for implementation are:

The state program entitled Socio-economic Development of the Russian Arctic Zone up to 2020, other public programs of the Russian Federation, federal and departmental target programs and sectoral strategies, regional and municipal programs, and programs of large companies with activities aimed at the comprehensive development of the territory of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation. Implementing the Strategy involves creating a system for monitoring and analyzing levels of national security and socio-economic development of the Arctic zone, with the Arctic zone singled out as a separate subject of statistical surveys. (The Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and National Security up to 2020, 2013, Chapter 4, Art. 20)

According to the articles 22 and 23 of the same Strategy, the funding is made of the federal budget for the fiscal year as well as extra-budgetary means are made from a public-private partnership.

So, the official state strategy documents set the main directions to support investment policy for energy, industrial, and transport projects and infrastructure as well as scientific, innovative, and technical activities. All comprised, it represents intentions of the government to turn the upcoming times focal for the region, where the advancement of NSR and deposits, region's integration into the country, and overall development are of the highest priority that could establish completely new geopolitical reality. The implementation and completion of the Strategy would grant Russia competing gains by bolstering its position as well as its influence in the Arctic region.

ARCTIC GOVERNANCE AND RUSSIAN CLAIM

The Arctic is governed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) since it is mostly composed of an ocean covered by ice rather than land. UNCLOS (1982) defines the sovereignty of coastal states, alongside their rights and duties for a particular space. So, from the baseline to 12 nm stretches the territorial sea.³ Continuing for another 12 nm, until 24 nm extends the contiguous zone.⁴ The EEZ stretches from 12 to 200 nm.⁵ The continental shelf is the last possible extension of the jurisdiction of a coastal state with another no longer than 150 nm from its EEZ or 100 nm from its isobaths that is 2500 meters.⁶ "The continental shelf of a coastal State comprises the seabed and subsoil of the submarine areas that extend beyond its territorial sea throughout the natural prolongation of its land territory to the outer edge of the continental margin."⁷(UNCLOS, 1982, p. 53). Nonetheless, according to the Convention regulations, this provision applies only to submarine ridges, excluding submarine elevations, which are the natural components of the continental margin. It grants the coastal state with exclusive rights of exploration and exploitation of both living and non-living resources beneath, including the minerals.⁸ So, the extension would be possible if the coastal state proves the end of national landmass and the beginning of the ocean floor (UNCLOS, 1982).

All these procedures are regulated through the submitted application of the coastal state to 'The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf' (CLCS). Based on that application, the CLCS gives its recommendations, which are acknowledged as 'final and binding' for those who ratified the Convention.⁹ The CLCS is operating under the Annex 2 of the UNCLOS, having two profound functions. First of all, it comes up with scientific and technical advice to the states that prepare submissions, including review submissions, too. Secondly, it evaluates the gathered data and findings by the applicant state and, based on them, give recommendations under the Art. 76. The recommendations are made after the approval by the majority, 2/3 out 21 members of the Commission, and then given to the applicant and the United Nations Secretary-General, in a written form. If there is a disagreement between the applicant's submission and the Commission's recommendations, then the applicant state has to gather more data, in a reasonable time, to support its claim. Nonetheless,

³ The coastal state enjoys the right to put navigation regulations and use natural resources.

⁴ Here, also the coastal state preserves the rights for effective control and enforcement.

⁵ The coastal country enjoys the right to exploit, explore, preserve, and manage all the resources beneath (living as well as non-living) and get economic gains from it. It can also construct, install, and use artificial islands, pipelines, cables. Additionally, the coastal country enjoys the right to enforce the laws and regulations when it is necessary to make compliance with the law that it adopted.

⁶ It is supposed to stretch up to the end of the continental margin; nevertheless, the limit is 350 nm.

The continental margin comprises the submerged prolongation of the landmass of the coastal state, and consists of the seabed and subsoil of the shelf, the slope, and the rise. It does not include the deep ocean floor with its oceanic ridges or the subsoil thereof.(UNCLOS, 1982, p. 53)

⁸ If the coastal state does not do these activities, no one can do, if not receives the permission of the coastal country.

⁹ According to Annex 2, Art. 4, the coastal state would be able to submit its application after ten years of the ratification of the Convention.

the Commission solely provides scientific data and determinacy on the outer limit of a continental shelf. If there are overlapping claims and adjacent or opposite coasts, with shared continental shelf landmass, the CLCS does not engage in negotiations, disputes as well as resolve or prejudice the current issue. It leaves the final determination of the maritime borders to the coastal states with opposing claims (UNCLOS, 1982; Isted, 2009).

The Ilulissat Declaration adopted on May 28, 2008, between Arctic Five is a complimentary, however vital document of the Arctic governance. Underlining the climate change and its impact on the Arctic region, the Declaration focused on 3 points. First of all, they refuse the need for the creation of the new comprehensive framework for Arctic governance, reconfirm their commitment to comply with the current legal framework, the UNCLOS and settle the issues related to the territorial and sovereignty claims, including the extension of the continental shelf in an ordered way. Furthermore, they pledge to consider extra measures to ensure preservation and protection of the unique ecosystem of Arctic as well as make declaration to take measures aiming for strengthening and improving the safety of navigation. Thirdly, the participants express the need and their desire to improve cooperation in science and research data exchange, including those relating to the continental shelf. It is essential for the territorial claims in the Arctic, as by affirming their dominance in the region, the Arctic Five address, and made clear guidance for the issues relating to the jurisdiction over the arctic waters, including resources (Ilulissat Declaration, 2008).

The Ilulissat Declaration has resulted in discharging the intense atmosphere which was hovering in the region after Russia has planted a flag on the floor of North Pole and followed concerns among the other Arctic coastal states. After the adoption of the Declaration, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov furtherly discharged it by emphasizing the Russian compliance to the UNCLOS and outlining that the event of flag-planting by Russia did not have any legal outcomes similar to the flag-planting on the moon by US (Prokhorov, 2008).

So, the chief geopolitical concern in the region is related to the sovereignty and authority rights over the sectors of the Arctic Ocean, causing territorial disputes between the Arctic states. Amid contradictory claims are the Lomonosov and Mendeleev – Alpha Ridges. Denmark, Canada, and Russia claim that they are the natural prolongation of their respective landmass, so they gather empirical evidence to back their submitted applications (Ebinger & Zambetakis, 2009).

The first Russian claim was made on December 20, 2001, under Art. 76, having a central claim over the Mendeleev – Alpha and Lomonosov Ridges. The CLCS rejected it because of inadequate documentation and recommended it to accomplish further investigation to collect more scientific evidence that can support its claims. Aiming to strengthen its claims, Russia launched two prominent expeditions in 2007 and 2014 with the lead of famed scientists in the field Arthur Chilingarov¹⁰ (Benitah, 2007; Ria Novosti, 2015). On August 3, 2015, Russia submitted its revised version to the CLCS, claiming over 1,191,347 sq. km, including Mendeleev – Alpha rise slopes and Lomonosov Ridge. According to the Russian application, they are submarine elevations, natural components of the Eurasian/Siberian continental margin that extends 650 km from baseline (United Nations, 2015).

¹⁰ ‘Arktika 2007’ (Арктика 2007) became famous with the Russian flag-planting on the floor of Lomonosov Ridge, and Arthur Chilingarov’s prominent speech that the Arctic has ever been Russian, while ‘Arktika 2014’ (Арктика 2014) collected more data for the resubmission of its application in 2015.

Consequently, in theory, the retrieve of the Soviet Arctic sector is possible, if firstly be proven, Lomonosov Ridge is neither an oceanic¹¹ nor a submarine ridge¹². If nonetheless, Russia present hard scientific evidence proving Lomonosov Ridge being a submarine elevation, of the Siberian landmass (continental platform), it will be considered as a part of the continental margin, hence and the sublimity of 350 nm will not be applicable, as this provision does not include the submarine elevations¹³ (UNCLOS, 1982). However, even if Russia succeeded in its submission to CLCS, the delineation process cannot take place soon. First of all, Russia, Canada, and Denmark have overlapping claims, and the CLCS provides scientific evidence and does not resolve the issues, and secondly, the evaluation processes of the claim can take as much as 10–15 years and even more.

Nonetheless, in Ilulissat, the Arctic Five reconfirmed their commitments to UNCLOS and the existing framework on the principles of the settlement of the overlapping disputes. Thus, maritime boundary issue rest in bilateral efforts, talks, and negotiations among coastal countries, within the framework and compliance of international law. The Russian submission to the CLCS in its current form is also about asserting its dominance in the Arctic, the region having NATO members as opponents since waterways and a more considerable sum of resources are already within the Russian EEZ or 350 nm sublimity. In the case of the successful conclusion of application, approximately one-half of the Arctic might become under Russian control that could establish an all-new reality in the geopolitics and the overall Arctic. The resolution will be achieved after hard and long discussions and negotiations between the Arctic coastal states and not any soon.

CONCLUSIONS

The newly discovered geographical factors impact the political thinking of Arctic states, pushing them to reconsider their Arctic policies, which inevitably lead to disputes and disagreements between them and transform the region into a geopolitical hotspot. Taking into account the growing dependency of the world economy from the deposits and at the same time their scarcity in the current era, the national governments probably will not hesitate to defend, promote and maximize the materialization of their national interests.

Russia has a multilayered impact on the Arctic region that is difficult to overlook. It stretches from gradual globalization and improvement to the controversies in the region. Its promotion of interests via the Arctic National Strategy shapes the overall geopolitical situation and gradually transforming it into a global region. The gradual transition from the peripheral position into the globalized has vastly resulted from the Russian energy-related and overall economic activity in the region. To carry and advance that activity, Russia intends to establish a decisive infrastructural, all single uniting system in NSR, including the contiguous waters of it. By doing so, Russia links and complements the energy sector development to development of the NSR as an extra choice to the global maritime highways, making it a precondition for the overall development of the Russian Arctic sector. Another contributing factor of Russia to the region's globalization is its icebreakers' fleet that are necessary conditions for the overall socio-economic activity, as without its operationalization, resource development, scientific research, as well as the operationalization of NSR, would be much harder, if not impossible. The promotion of Russian interests in the region resulted in the intensification of the overall Arctic geopolitics,

¹¹ It is neither a piece of coastal state's land territory nor a part of the continental edge, it is a constituent element of the deep ocean floor, and according to Section 2 of the Convention, acknowledged the common heritage of humankind so can be claimed neither by a juridical person nor by the state for exclusive jurisdiction.

¹² It was being a part of the continental shelf and considered as a prolongation of a landmass, nonetheless not continental margin's natural part because not being submarine elevation. In this situation, the delineation process would take within the sublimity of 350 nm.

¹³ It is continental margin's natural part, having either oceanic or continental origin

bringing about both positive and negative trends. On the one hand, Russia, being the first submitter to the CLCS for the extension of its continental shelf and further manifesting its ambitions, served as an impetus to the Arctic coastal countries to counterbalance the Russian claims, making the Arctic a geopolitical hotspot. On the other hand, Russia, as a pragmatic player, expressed its desire for regional international cooperation, with prominent examples of the agreed framework of the governance achieved in Ilulissat and joint projects that serve as an impetus for the improved regional stability and predictability.

The Arctic region has a unique geopolitical and strategic significance for Russia, as one of its imperatives of the strategic and geopolitical sovereignty is linked to the north. It is one of the most promising conditions and even guarantees to let Russia depart from the geopolitical vacuum, establish itself a dominant power regionally as well as revive its role and status globally. Apart from being one of the most critical national security pillars, it also supports the existing foreign policy leverage that is considerably backed by the utilization of energy supplies from a long-run perspective. To keep and support this leverage and boost its position, Russia needs to advance its interests in the Arctic region. It will carry out and resist the challenges that face, recognizing the significance of the link between the Arctic, its future as well as the status of dominant power in the region. Comprehensive advancement of Russian interests generated both positive and negative trends in the Arctic, making it an international arena of both competition and cooperation.

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